

In The Claims

Kindly enter the claim amendments, without prejudice, as set forth below. A complete listing of the claims is provided, with a parenthetical indication of the status of each claim and markings to show current changes.

CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) Molten metal discharging device between a first upper container (1) and a second lower container (3), the device comprising a slide valve nozzle comprising an upper (42) and a lower (43) nozzle, the lower nozzle being movable with respect to the upper one, a circular blade (46), fixed to the base of the slide valve nozzle around a molten metal discharging aperture, said lower nozzle being inserted into said aperture with the lower end protruding from it, the discharging device comprising also a cylindrical ~~shroud~~ jacket (22) defining a vertical axis and having at its upper end gas sealing means (24) adapted to be coupled to said circular blade (46) and adapted to surround the lower end of the lower nozzle (43) in operation, said cylindrical ~~shroud~~ jacket (22) being fixed above said second container.
2. (currently amended) The device according to claim 1 wherein a tube (21) of refractory material is inserted inside said cylindrical ~~shroud~~ jacket (22).
3. (original) The device according to claim 1 wherein said slide valve nozzle is able to be coupled to the base of the first container (1) with mountings (48, 49) fitted with eyelets able to receive pivots (50).
4. (currently amended) The device according to claim 1 wherein ~~are envisaged~~ there are provided means for moving said lower nozzle (43) with respect to the upper nozzle (42) so as to regulate a liquid metal flux through the slide valve nozzle.
5. (original) The device according to claim 1 wherein said gas sealing means comprise an upwardly open toroidal container adapted to be filled with sand into which said circular blade (46) is sunk during operation.
6. (currently amended) The device according to claim 1 wherein there are provided means for injecting inert gasses into said cylindrical jacket (22).

7. (currently amended) Coupling method for containers, by means of a device according to ~~one of the preceding claims~~claim 1, wherein there is provided a first container (1) placed at a level above a second container (3) and, filled with molten metal, with the slide valve nozzle fixed to said first container (1), to which there is fixed the slide valve nozzle and which is filled with molten metal is placed at a level above a second container (3) comprising:
- a) putting in an operating position said second container (3) to receive molten metal from the first container (1);
 - b) coupling said first container (1) in a predetermined position on said second container (3) by way of a movement comprising a descending component, so as to sink the circular blade (46) into the gas ~~restraining~~sealing means (24).

Applicant requests examination of the newly amended claims.

If any matters remain unresolved, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned by telephone at (617) 557-2900.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 50-0374** referencing docket no. 1182.015/3215PTUS. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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